

Forest Protective Unit Celebrates Anniversary

Editor's Note: The following letters, records and pertinent data regarding the first year of operation of what is now the Klamath Forest Protective Association were dug out of the files by District Warden Hal Ogle and are reprinted here exactly as they appeared on the 1908 report.

By HAL OGLE

Pokegama, Oregon
August 31, 1908

Friend Jack:

Yours of 28th at hand and make haste to reply. The large fire near Puckett's is about out and has done very little damage.

We had a bad electrical storm sometime ago that set fire near old Pokegama and on the south slope of Grizzly. The first named I found and put out in short order, but we are still working on the other. Jack F. will be over tomorrow and I may be able to say that the fire on old Grizzly is out, before mailing this letter. He will help me long as possible.

We also have a fire on the river above Ren Frains' place, on Sec. 27, 28, and 34, T40, R6, but it is nearly burned out and did no great damage. The only actual settlers I know of just now are C. Tuttle on Sec. 5, T40, R5, and some guy has a new cabin on the NW of Sec. 15, T40, R5, seems to be there at times, but have never been able to see him and he has no notice.

Tuttle is on the NE of 5-40-5. The others are not pretending to live on the claims. I have a score of notices that I picked up last week but so far none are living on the claims. W. T. Rowlee is an actual settler.

Received check, many thanks. Enclose receipt.

Yours truly,
Signed, John Thinden Jr.

Say Jack I have been so busy fighting fire that I forgot to mail this so am going to add some. As I was on my way to camp from the breaks of the river above Ren Frains' place last night, I went through Pokegama, or where it was, for the depot, store, warehouse, stable and several small buildings were a mass of flames.

Abbot was drawing some gasoline and it exploded. Everything is very dry around here and those buildings lasted about 10 minutes. Brown didn't have time to lock the safe and everything was lost, papers and all. Don't think they saved 30 cents worth outside of some hay and grain.

Fire started about 6 o'clock and the horses were not yet stabled. They saved the houses above the track. I understand that the new buildings will be down near the mill.

So far I find no forest fire resulting from it. D--ed if I can find any free fire fighters on the river so far. We are doing the best we can but I am afraid this dry weather is going to cause trouble. Assuring you of my best efforts with the fire.

I remain, truly yours, J.Z.

P.S. No one hurt at Pokegama fire.

And so the first work report was put on file with the Klamath Lake Counties Forest Fire Association, now known as the Klamath Forest Protective Association. This was only 35 years after the Modoc War and one year after the United States Forest Service was started. Horses were used for transportation and stage stations where horse and man could be fed and bed were located along the routes of travel.

At these stations the different patrolmen were located where they could hear of any fires in the area and also pass along notes to other patrolmen by medium of stage drivers or freight teamsters. The only railroad in Klamath County ended at Pokegama, and not until

the next year 1909 did another railroad come into Klamath Falls near mid-year. The first year's report told of five employees and 17 fires, total area protected about 500,000 acres from the Upper Klamath Lake to the California line and Klamath Valley on the east to Greensprings summit on the west.

The patrolmen were paid \$80 per month, and were asked to furnish their own horse, saddle, compass and keep for man and beast. The association furnished the shovel or other fire fighting equipment. Saddle scabbards were converted or used to carry the shovel on horseback. No lookouts or telephone lines were available and it was necessary for the patrolmen to ride each day looking for fires. Some days a fire would be found that had been burning for days and covered so much ground that it was impossible for one man, one horse and one shovel to control, in this event hazardous parts were checked to minimize the loss.

After all, timber was only worth about 25 cents per 1,000, and a few 100,000 feet of loss was cheaper than spending several hundred dollars to extinguish. The following is taken from Jack Kimball's 1908 season report. "Fire No. 1, started September 1, while patrolman Johnson was fighting fire on No. 12, he arranged for local parties to watch it and notify him if it spread, it was in a sheltered location and burned slowly doing very

little damage, cause unknown, no expense.

Fire No. 5 started August 17, put out September 12, expense \$7.85. (Report of fire No. 15 is interesting historically.) The report says this was the most expensive fire to control, it started about August 25, and on September 7, a heavy wind sprang up catching the fire up and sweeping it to the cut-over lands around Pokegama.

"I secured a crew from the Klamath Lake Railroad Company and by working all night we succeeded in getting it under control. Damage was quite extensive although the area burned over was

THE COVER

This picture shows one of the lonely lookouts manned through the fire season in order to assure safety for the region's timber. This lookout is perched on top of Hamilton Butte, named for Alice Hamilton, is sometimes called Bradford Butte. It was manned this last summer by Bob Trelease.



CLOVER CREEK STATION wasn't much for elegance in 1911 when this picture was snapped. The picture shows patrolmen Bill Lambert standing in front of the tent along with his saddle and other gear. The saddle on the opposite side belonged to Hal Ogle, who had ridden up that day to instruct Lambert in the use of a compass for running lines. Lambert was the only man at the camp and probably had at least 100,000 acres under his supervision. Today, with all kinds of modern equipment, portable radio, trucks and what not the average patrolman has 25,000 acres to take care of. Lambert spent the entire fire season at this camp.

— Photo by Ogle

not timbered very heavily with pine, and the actual damage was mostly white fir. Time and space will not permit complete history of KFPFA but a mention of the cost of protection of 500,000 acres in 1906 was only \$2,700.56, as compared to last year's cost for employer's taxes alone which was \$4,336.22.

After seven years experience and after adding about a million more acres, we find a portion of the report for 1915. Quote "It may interest the members of this association to know that we are carrying on each year much permanent improvement work. We own miles of telephone line, provide comfortable headquarters cabins for our patrolmen and keep open many roads and trails into our forests.

"Four automobiles and three motorcycles belonging to employees furnish rapid transportation over this territory. The Oregon Forest Fire laws might have proven unpopular if enforced by a less conscientious and capable official than the present state forester, F. A. Elliott. His practical knowledge of our forest conditions has been coupled with a desire for fair play. To him we are indebted for the appointment of C. C. Chitwood, supervising warden of this district, an official who has "made good in every sense."

This association started with nothing but a determination to protect our forests. No telephones, no cars, no trucks, no cats or trans-

ports, no lookouts, no airplanes or radios. We have always been ready to accept new methods and equipment, and some day we may even find some method of using atomic energy.

As our trees become more valuable, our protection plans must become more intensive and not as extensive as it is even now. At the beginning money was spent for material and equipment that we would not be able to use today. Who knows some day our present material and equipment could become as useless as hay and grain, coal oil, horses and wagons, pack outfits, saddles, broad axes, etc. is today.

Fifty years have wrought a lot of changes, what will the next 50 bring?

SPECIFIC DESCRIPTION OF EACH FIRE AS PLATTED AND NUMBERED ON THE BLUE PRINT.

No. 1. Started about September 1, while Patrolman Johnson was fighting fire on No. 12. He arranged for local parties to watch it and notify him if it spread. It was in a sheltered location and burned slowly, doing very little damage. Cause unknown. No expense.

No. 2. Started July 11 and extinguished the same day. Practically no damage. Cause campers fire. Pearson put it out without extra expense.

No. 3. Started July 2 in the Ackley cuttings. Was extinguished by Pearson and crew from Ackley's mill. No damage to green timber. No extra expense.

No. 4. Started September 1 and put out same day. No damage. Cause unknown. No extra expense.

No. 5. Started August 17. Put out September 12. Damage quite extensive, consisting of trees burned down, trees weakened, and reproduction destroyed. Expense \$7.85.

No. 6. Started July 29. Out in four days, damage slight. Cause probably incendiary. Extra expense \$19.25.

No. 7. Started June 27 and out in three days. Damage slight. Cause probably incendiary. Extra expense, \$14.75.

No. 8. Was finally extinguished by the crew which I took into the Pokegama country. Damage was very extensive, as this was a very hot fire and a great many trees are destroyed, many more are weakened, and the reproduction is all destroyed. Cause unknown. The extra expense of fighting fire is not segregated from the general statement.

No. 9. Started July 23, out in two days. No damage. Cause unknown. No expense.

No. 10. Started July 23. I was in reach of the patrolmen and they wired me for help. I took a crew down and got the fire under control that night. Damage was considerable where the fire first started but we saved all trees after checking it. Twenty three trees burned on about 10 acres as this was our first bad fire. I instructed the men to use the plan of banking with dirt the partly gutted trees, thereby putting out the fire and saving the trees from future fires for several years. (This plan we have used in all subsequent fires.) Cause incendiary. Extra expense \$164.90.

No. 11. Started about August 20, at the same time when the other bad fires in this district started. I got this fire under control with the crew I equipped on horseback, on September 11, but the fire was not out until October 1. There was less valuable time destroyed by this fire than in any other of the large fires in this district this season. It burned more slowly and the pine generally escaped. Extra expense is included in general statement.

No. 12. Started about August 23. Patrolman Johnson discovered it and as it was located on the Cascade Forest Reserve, he notified the forest ranger in charge at Odesa, sending him several messages.

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